1969

Confrontation: An Approach in Counseling

Mary Josephine Denja
Loyola University Chicago

CONFRONTATION: AN APPROACH IN COUNSELING

by

Mary Josephine Denja

Submitted to the Graduate School in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for M.A.
in Education

Loyola University
Chicago, Illinois
December 19, 1969

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INTRODUCTION

Counseling in high school has developed from academic and vocational advice-giving to a highly complex system of leading children and youth to self-understanding, realistic self appraisal, the establishment of value systems, and an awareness of their place and responsibility in the world of work and society. School counseling is, as yet, a young and fluid function of guidance.[1] But those working in this field, such as Gilbert Wrenn, predict that "a new emphasis in counseling will be to help individuals develop individuality."[2]

The counselor of today who is brave enough to acknowledge the plight of youth is also aware that new perceptions are important and can lead to new attitudes and possibly even new methodology in the counseling situation. In other words, the counselor of today is a Janus-figure. Because he experiences the joys of a successful counseling relationship as well as the failures, he is in a position to scrutinize both "faces" and extract the essential ingredients to a good counseling relationship. Daily he sees promising students

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[1] Dorthy Davis Sebald, "Counseling in Schools," Ernest Harms and Paul Schreiber, eds., Handbook of Counseling Techniques (N.Y.: MacMillan Co., 1963), p. 79.

[2] Gilbert Wrenn, The Counselor in a Changing World (Washington, D.C.: APGA, 1962), p. 166.

drop out of school, run away from home, become apathetic, and achieve far less than their potential. He sees what is and dreams of what could be.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to consider a concept often used in counseling to facilitate client potential. This concept is known as confrontation. Very little has been researched and written about confrontation. Essentially it is an interaction or intraction between counselor and client in which an unknown or unwanted aspect of reality is brought face to face with all its emotional overtones, risks and challenges for integrated action to be taken.

Confrontation is an act initiated by the counselor for the client with the intention of helping the client move from a state of passivity to one of responsible action and control. Confrontation in counseling is neither an attack nor a challenge to fight it out. It is a peak experience in which the condition is faced in all its realities with the implication for action to be taken. The confrontation precipates a leaping forward of client and counselor, a continued progression upstream to the point of regression or growth. It is always the counselor and client working together for the health and growth of both parties.

Many risks are involved as the counselor prepares the client for the forward move. Working together they seek to come to grips with reality. After the confrontation neither counselor nor client is the same because a decision has been made-- a working through has taken place.

In this paper the dialectic of confrontation will be applied to a definition of the counseling relationship, particularly to the aspects of goals in counseling and the function of the high school counselor. Confrontation will then be discussed as it is delineated in psychological literature and in life situations. The latter section will specifically deal with the phenomenological aspects of confrontation. Finally, the projection of confrontation into the high school counseling session or relationship will be considered.

CHAPTER 1

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Definitions of counseling are abundant and varied. They stem from many schools of thought. Some of the more prominent were born from the theories of behaviorism, psychoanalysis, client-centered, trait and factor, and existentialism. Others have been bred from any combination of these basic five. Rather than run the gamut of definitions, however, let us take for our model an ideal counselor who has gathered together the various counseling theories and distilled from them some skeletal, basic tenents. We assume that these tenents are recognized and accepted by all counselors. They are:

1. a relationship established on mutual trust must be developed before change can begin.
2. readiness for counseling on the part of the client.
3. the counselor must possess extensive knowledge of human dynamics.
4. the client has capacity for growth and change.
5. communication between counselor and client must be present if change is to occur.[3]

The key words in these five basic tenents are client,

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[3]Sebald, op. cit., p. 79

counselor, relationship, and change.

The existential "human condition" is the reality which brings the client face to face with a counselor. He may be in a state of vague fear and confusion, in a state of pressure or physical tension to the point where his perceptions have narrowed and he is wavering, not able to act upon the means to solve his problems. He admits to the reality that he needs help even though he may be only vaguely aware of what is bothering him.

The client feels fundamentally an alienation, a being out of touch with himself and with his environment. This perception of disequilibrium is highly charged with emotion: "Who am I? I might be going crazy! Get help!" The client comes to the counselor confused about himself and his relation to the world and others. He comes in a condition of potential health or continued distress.

Fundamentally the client is capable of growth and change. He has a potential for greater self-fulfillment. Fundamentally the client can move from negative attitudes to positive-creative ones. Fundamentally he is ready for an encounter.

The client comes to the counselor. He will not be able to reach greater independence unless he is able to interact with the counselor. In fact, it is possible that the counseling situation will worsen rather than ameliorate the client's state. He hopefully comes with a deep desire to be accepted and understood. What the counselor is--his total personality--will determine just how he will approach and structure the relationship. But the affect and effect of

the relation between the counselor and the client will depend largely on the counselor's ability to understand, accept, and empathize with the client. He can do this only insofar as he is able to understand, accept, and be open to the experience of his own self.

It follows then that the relationship established by the one coming for help and the one giving that help is of utmost importance. If the counselor genuinely recognizes the client as a person of worth, he will not dominate the tone-feeling of the counseling relationship but will assist the client in expressing his emotions to gradual, full resonant depths. The establishment of this relationship is largely dependent on the attitudes and feelings of the counselor to communicate such a relationship to the client. It is only then that the client can unfold and merge as his true self. With the nourishment of such a relationship the client can move from a state of anxiety to one of growth or equilibrium, and the counselor grows with him.

The counseling relationship, which is ideally the interaction of a whole counselor (in the nature described above) with a client seeking to become whole, is too often reduced to "role playing." As such, role playing asks for partial selves. In this sense, the counseling relation can not thrive because its growth demands selves in their total dimensions. It demands an interpersonal relation.

With growth comes <u>change</u>, a change of perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. Change is the desired consequence

of the relationship and witness to positive action taken by the client to become whole. A high school girl can be openly patient and tolerant of a boyfriend who is inattentive, inconsiderate, and unkind to her. During the counseling relationship she uncovers the discrepancy between the way she is feeling and the way in which she is acting. The reason she is tolerating the boy's behavior is because she wants to have a boyfriend like the other girls in the crowd. If she decides that her need to have a boyfriend supercedes her desire to be treated as a special human being, then she will accept his behavior both externally and internally, However, she may decide, after experiencing a few more counseling sessions, that her need to be treated as a human being is more important and consequently she will act upon her insight and terminate the relationship.

Client, counselor, relationship, and change, the key words within the tenets of counseling are all involved in the concept of confrontation. The relationship between the client and counselor determines the success of the therapy. The latter's ability to communicate either verbally or nonverbally to the client that he <u>does</u> care, he <u>does</u> understand, and that the client <u>is</u> worthwhile makes confrontation possible. The counselor is a mirror for the client. He is the client's inner self with the courage to say "This is the way things are. What is to be done about it?" Just as looking into a mirror sometimes shows the need to change externals, so too confrontation indicated that something must be done about the

internal situation.

This concept of change as a result of the counseling relationship brings us to the discussion of goals in counseling. Ideally, the goals of counseling are understanding and acceptance of self, openness to the experience of becoming a whole person, and ultimately action. This lifetime task includes a consciousness of one's talents, faults, interests, personal goals, attitudes, and values. It also includes a perception of one's needs, as they are, and how they might be met. Through counseling and an understanding of the counseling process, a client is free to explore all these factors of his personality. He has the opportunity to express his deepest feelings openly and freely.

Theoretically, in this setting, the client can achieve insight into himself. There is a deepened awareness of what is going on objectively (reality) and subjectively (client's perception) within and without the personality. The client sees relationships he never saw before: the realization that he is doing his best under the circumstances, that he cannot control all the forces working on him, that happiness comes from within rather than from without, that people are basically friendly rather than hostile, that one must be loveable in order to receive love.[4]

Understanding, then, includes a consciousness of one's

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[4]Lawrence Brammer and Everett Shostrom, Therapeutic Psychology (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 103.

own behavior, motives for that behavior and feelings of being in touch with oneself. With understanding and acceptance of self comes a trust of self, a confidence in one's power to choose responsibly and to act in accord with one's best self-interest.

Little good is accomplished if the client merely gets considerable relief from his feelings and an intellectual understanding of his problems. The critical questions are: Does he act on the basis of his new feelings, perceptions, and understanding? Does he try out new methods of behaving? The client initiated counseling because he was dissatisfied with one or many aspects of his life. Many of these aspects within his experience are also within his control and, consequently, subject to change. It is the element of change through action which is essential to the success of the counseling relationship.

Very often the only change possible is one of attitude. But a change in attitude is not insignificant because it sooner or later affects behavior. A change of behavior brings with it new feedback from the environment. New feedback from the environment leads to new perceptions and perhaps more new attitudes.

The healthypersonality has a predominance of positive rather than negative attitudes, and in successful counseling there should be a movement from negative to positive feelings. As the counseling relationship develops, negative feelings such as confusion, hate, fear, and the like will begin to give

way to an unfolding of positive feelings of confidence, love, and security. Too many negative attitudes, on the other hand, can leave the client at a loss in his effort to interact with his environment to any degree of satisfaction, and this can be one good indication of the seriousness of the person's problems.

As the positive signs of growth appear, the client becomes increasingly independent. This independence or freedom can be characterized by greater interaction of the self with the environment and greater efforts to change the environment when possible. He is more willing to depend on himself and rely on his own feelings rather than go along with the crowd. He understands and accepts the reality of the mystery of life. Life is not divided into neat, little packages which can be easily examined and understood. Life contains the unknown, the hidden, the unforseen as well as the known, the open, the foreseen. Consequently, in the face of the mystery of life the client becomes content to live in the unknown. His tolerance of ambiguity increases, and he is content to live as a process rather than a product. He becomes a whole person who "trusts the unknown perhaps more than the known."[5]

The foundation of his trust of the unknown lies primarily in the newly discovered self and in his newly acquired trust of self which leaves him open to experience and con-

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[5]Robert Carkhuff and Bernard Berenson, Beyond Counseling Therapy (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 133.

fident that he has within himself the resources to meet whatever changes may occur in his environment. He is not afraid to feel sorrow as well as joy; he is not afraid to endure rejection for the sake of a belief; he is not afraid to risk worldly goods for a higher good.

Summarizing the goals of counseling we can say that the counselor seeks to help the client to become himself, a real, whole person through understanding and acceptance of self, to be open to new experience and to effect change by action. Confrontation can facilitate these very goals, hence its importance in the field of counseling.

To what has been discussed so far let us add, at this point, the function of the counselor in high school. Most counseling in this particular area is done with pupils who do not deviate too markedly from the "normal." Pupils whose problems are of a psychotic or psychoneurotic nature or who have serious personality, character, behavior disorders are usually referred to a hospital or clinic for treatment by psychologists or psychiatrists in a clinical setting.[6]

The adolescent needs listed by McKinney are: independence, heterosexuality, social acceptance, emotional security, and vocational success.[7] Morris claims that once the physical

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[6]Sebald, op. cit., p. 76.

[7]Fred McKinney, Counseling for Personal Adjustment (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958), p. 58.

needs of the adolescent are fulfilled, he has a need for exploration and adventure, creativity, sharing experience, personal recognition, status, living with authority, sense of achievement, personal sense of direction, and personal commitment.[8]

Student problems according to Stogdill are personality defects, difficult home adjustments, and social strain. He claims that his findings are in accord with published reports of other clinicians showing that students come for help not because of one major, acute difficulty, but as a result of a number of chronic, minor problems.[9]

It must also be realized that the high school counselor's work is not limited to the student. Among his client's are parents and teachers as well. It is imperative therefore that the high school counselor possess a sound knowledge of personality dynamics, in individuals and in groups, appraisal techniques, and a knowledge of the psychological effect upon the individual, of educational, vocational, and other environmental demands.

The importance of counseling in the school setting cannot be minimized, for the ages at which formal education occurs are also those at which counseling can make its maximum

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[8]Eugene C. Morris, Counseling With Young People (New York: Association Press, 1954), pp. 13-21.

[9]Emily Stogdill, "Techniques of Student Counseling," Arthur Broyfield, ed., Modern Methods of Counseling (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950) p. 252.

contribution. The educational setting will be one of the most important institutional locations for counseling. Furthermore, counseling and education have the common goal of contributing to personality growth and personal development.[10]

The element of time in the high school counseling session is important. Whether it be fifteen minutes or a half hour, it should be adhered to. Life is filled with limitations and growing toward maturity implies an understanding and using of these limits. In a sense, the counseling session is a microcosm of typical experience. In a small but significant way, the objective limits of the real world are made an integral part of the counseling session.[11]

Since it is a growth or maturing process, high school counseling has for its goal--change. The degree of change depends upon a successful counselor-client interaction. At first the client usually builds up confidence in his ability through small, self-initiated actions motivated by insights he has recently gained during the counseling relationship. These actions, in themselves, may appear to be insignificant but they have deep implications for a new way of life. As he re-examines the action-experiences in further counseling sessions, he realizes that they have given him a greater sense of conviction about his own judgment. He now knows that even

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[10]Edward Bordin, Psychological Counseling (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 20.

[11]Charles A. Curran, Counseling in Catholic Life and Education (New York: MacMillan Co., 1964), pp. 204-5.

small self-directed choices are more meaningful and more pleasant than his previous state of confused dependency. This in turn stimulated him to more important and more responsible actions.[12] Counseling has initiated him into a new life pattern, a new framework of self-awareness--a confidence and security to look at and face what might be and say, "Why not!" This emotional maturity is the by-product of many elements, especially the counselor's personality, his philosophy of life, and an effective use of confrontation.

[12] Ibid., p.168.

CHAPTER 11

CONFRONTATION

Since confrontation is a means of reaching emotional maturity, it is necessary at this point to consider a definition of the word. Certainly its use is widespread. "Confrontation" is seen and heard almost daily in newspapers, television, and radio as an abbreviated expression of "I dare you to cross this line," or "Knock this chip off my shoulder and you've had it," or other variations ranging from bloody challenge to verbal abuse.

Likewise in counseling and psychological literature the term confrontation has been used in several ways and in several contexts. It has been intended to mean a challenge, an encounter, an attack, an accusation, a slur. Even such men as John Branan; George Leonard, who has been engaged in experimental work at the Esalen Institute at Big Sur; Brammer and Shostrom, noted writers in the field of counseling; and Carkhuff and Berenson do not agree on the meaning and significance of the word confrontation.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to critically examine the psychological literature available on the subject through a study of the above mentioned men who have used the "confrontation" approach in counseling. This analysis will

serve to clarify the intricacies of the method and to assist in explaining its use in a counseling situation.

The Authentic Experience

According to John Branan, one of the first things to be noted about confrontation in counseling is that it is authentic for the counselor. In the interpersonal relationship the counselor is there to help. The counselor has his feelings about the client. These feelings arise from his commitment to the growth of the client. If the counselor does not act on these feelings, he must repress them. If he does not act on them, he will feel dishonest. Moreover, his inactivity will tend to reinforce the client's inactivity.

> It is said that the therapist should keep his feelings out of the therapeutic process. How is this possible? How can there be a really genuine relationship without such feelings, especially within such an intimate relationship as psychotherapy?... If the patient learns through the therapist, how can he learn to express his own feelings if the therapist cannot and does not express his?[13]

Confrontation by the counselor is not a technique; it is an activity resulting from genuine feelings. The counselor is more than technician; he is an artist involved in the creation of another person.

That confrontation is not a technique is indicated by its spontaneity. It is not plotted or programmed. There is

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[13]John Branan, "Client Reaction to Counselor's Use of Self-Experience," Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 45, p. 576.

a high correlation between the creative and the spontaneous. It is analogous to a man who is being pursued by a band of murderers. As he gallops across the plains, the rider foresees a great chasm which must be hurdled. He cannot hestitate to go on. When they arrive, both horse and man must leap spontaneously. The man must trust his horse as much as himself.

Branan discusses such a leap in a particular counseling situation:

> I have discussed the case of a young man who was quite uncomfortable with others.... Possibilities for action overwhelmed him and he could not make decisions. During one session such ruminations angered me to the point where, with a pound on the table, I stated 'When are you going to get off the pot?' With this the patient became tearful during which we explored what had taken place. Through this confrontation...we learned how others respond to him and that people would care for him if he would allow them to. Such an interchange strengthened the relationship, and progress from then on was rapid.... In many ways the schools of psychotherapy tend to reinforce man's alienation from man. The therapist, like the physician, keeps his therapeutic aramentarium between himself and the patient, preventing real inter-human contact.[14]

Branan[15] points to the fact that confrontation is the counselor's way of being himself and of being a model for the client himself. The confrontation is a learning experience that capsulizes the emotional content of the counseling relationship. It is a recapulation of the thematic tone: let's keep going.

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[14] Ibid., pp. 576-577.

[15] Ibid.

Recent research in the field of counseling on the counseling relationship seems to indicate that there are many similarities between an interpersonal relationship and a counseling relationship. Authenticity is necessary to both types of relationships. Often one hears a counselor after an interview speaking of anger, frustration, or anxiety toward or about a client that the counselor did not express within the interview. Such basic dishonesty can be detrimental to the authenticity of the relationship just as it would be detrimental in a personal relationship. Confrontation not only allows authenticity but demands it. However authenticity in itself does not constitute a confrontation.

Encountering the Truth

Another educational writer whose experiments are relevant to the discussion of confrontation in the sense that he defines and distinguishes between encounter and confrontation is George Leonard. His main contributions toward an understanding of the meaningfulness of an encounter are as follows: 1) The encounter emphasizes inherent strengths within the client rather than weakness. 2) The encounter can result in joy and ecstasy. 3) The encounter is a learning experience.[16] Also George Leonard's work deals primarily with groups. Group work in the school setting is becoming increasingly more significant.

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[16]George Leonard, Education and Ecstasy (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968), pp. 192-209.

Leonard feels that encountering the truth in an interpersonal relationship offers the reward of joy and ecstasy. "See. It exists. It's real. And we are all real. Everything we do is real. Everything we feel is real, and we don't have to hide emotions, and tell others to lie about their feelings."[17]

He describes the kinds of interpersonal relationships which took place in a workshop at Esalen Institute of the Big Sur, California. The workshop directed by Dr. William Schutz engaged people in honest encounter of feelings.

One of the first encounters for the couples involved a revelation of secrets. Dr. Schutz asked the couples to recall three things which they had kept secret throughout the years of their marriage. After the recall, he asked for volunteers to reveal their secrets to their partners. Throughout the sessions that followed "the three secrets continued to provide the framework upon which everything was built, and also to motivate a spectacular learning experience."[18]

The emphasis in the kind of encounter that took place was on the here and now setting. In the atmosphere of mutual help and comfort, encountering negative and destructive feelings did not lead to negative and destructive acts. "Encounter means simply owning up to your own feelings and revealing your deepest here and now emotions, no matter how

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[17]George Leonard, "Man and Woman," Look, Dec. 25, 1968, p. 61.

[18]Ibid., p. 65.

painful, how dangerous seeming or how embarassing."[19]

That such honesty involves risk is apparent from an incident in which one husband told his wife that he had had two extramarital affairs. After a few moments she sprang at his throat. They physically fought each other. Then the fight resolved into mutual sobbing and embracing.

The encounter is risky business, but Leonard makes an important comment which justifies taking the risk: "At first appearance, their marriage seemed mild enough, but as it turned out, each of them was harboring lies within lies. And the effort to protect the lies was sapping much of their energy and even twisting the personality and physical appearance of each."[20] The human waste of vital energy in dishonesty is, in all reality, equally risky.

An encountering relationship, then, is a challenge to grow.

> Surely there existed ways to make marriage a mechanism for change and growth, something that could challenge each partner to the heights of his or her ability.... But we could see that changing a marriage wouldn't be easy. It would demand the skill, the dedication--the heroism, even--usually reserved for politics, war or such epic endeavors as the conquest of space.[21]

One of the most difficult situations of the workshop turned out to be encountering the good things. Perhaps there is so much fear of the truth simply because it is always associated with the weaknesses or failures of a person. But quite often there is even more unawareness of

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[19] Ibid., p. 65.

[20] Ibid., p. 66.

[21] Ibid., p. 68.

one's strengths and positive qualities than there is of the negative ones. In all actuality every encounter is an encounter of one's strengths. "What will I do with this new perception, insight?"

The fact that an encounter is a learning experience within the interpersonal relationship cannot be denied. The fact that it is a challenge to seek out and discover new behavior and even new insights makes it a moment to remember. It is above the ordinary experiences because in it we transcend our old selves.

In the encounter groups, movement is from painful individual experiences to shared knowledge of each other, a sense of freedom:

> Almost everyone in the room was crying. We were unashamed of our tears.... We were human beings joined in a very precious, fragile awareness of our common plight, of the waste and loss in every life, and of hope for something better.... For many of us, that morning was transcendental, a space in life when ordinary objects seem to shimmer, when all faces are beautiful and time can be taken at the crest like a great onrushing wave.[22]

Thus for George Leonard the experience of encounter within a group counseling setting produced a feeling of transcendence. This feeling might be called a sense of being greatly in touch with self and with environment. It is--at best--an insight, a challenge, a sense of strength in one's ability to change.

Such experiences as those described by Leonard above

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[22]Leonard, Education and Ecstasy, p. 207.

can or cannot imply change. Often change does not occur as a result of insight, trancendental experiences or challenge. Confrontation on the other hand, and as we are defining it in this paper, implys action, change. Either one takes the leap toward a change in personality or the continuance of its development once he is in touch with self and environment or he remains static and regresses. Confrontation implys action taken to grow rather than the challenge to grow.

Confrontation: Beyond Insight

Brammer and Shostrom place confrontation on an interpretative continuum, and define it as the process by which the "counselor brings to the attention of the client ideas which are implicit but unconscious. The counselor confronts the client with his own words but relates past to present pointing out similarities, differences and discrepancies of which the client is unaware."[23]

They consider counselor responses intended to confront the client in the working-through phase of the counseling process as interpretation. The interpretative continuum of which Brammer and Shostrom speak consists of:

1. Reflection of feeling in which the counselor goes no further than the client has already gone verbally.
2. Clarification in which the counselor clarifies for the client what is implicit in what he has just said.

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[23] Lawrence Brammer and Evertt Shostrom, Therapeutic Psychology (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 247.

3. Reflection which deals with material just beyond the consciousness of the client.
4. Confrontation.
5. Depth interpretation in which the counselor introduces new concepts, relationships and associations which are rooted in the client's experiences, but which are taught at a fairly deep unconscious level.[24]

It is only after the counselor has established a climate in which the client feels secure and confident in the relationship that the counselor is free to effectively confront the client.

Some guidelines offered for knowing what to confront are according to Brammer and Shostrom determined by the particular stage in the counseling process. At first the counselor keeps interpretation very general and tentative, the main purpose being to explain the process to the client and to open up new areas for consideration. Later the interpretations take the form of explanations of how defense mechanisms develop and function in reference to the client's unconscious drives. Here, in the middle of the process, the counselor makes interpretations more specific. Towards the end of the relationship interpretations are more general and vague to encourage the client to do his own interpreting.

Timing is an important consideration to Brammer and Shostrom in the use of interpretation. In general the counselor gives an interpretation only when the client is ready to accept it. "Freud has stated many times that an interpretation should be given only when the client is at

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[24] Ibid., p. 254.

the point where he can almost formulate it himself."[25] Consequently it is necessary for the counselor to have an extensive picture of the client's personality. The client should be able to handle the additional anxiety created by the interpretation. Theoretically the client should grow as a result of the successful interpretation rather than regress or develop other symptoms.

The client must have sufficient ego strength to accept and assimilate constructively the new ideas brought to his conscious awareness. Furthermore, it is the client and not the counselor who ideally should elaborate on the interpretation.

In interpretation or confrontation the counselor must be ready to handle resistance by the client. If however there is sufficient evidence for the interpretation and the manifest behavior of the interpreted tendency is specified, and the counselor can point out evidence to his client which he cannot deny, then it is more likely that the validity of the interpretation will be apparent to the client. If resistence continues then perhaps the client is not ready to accept the interpretation at that time. Acceptance of the interpretation, on the other hand, does not necessarily signify success of the interpretation since a client could accept an interpretation but not be moved to insight or action or the client could superficially believe that he has

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[25] Robert Carkhuff and Bernard Berenson, Beyond Counseling and Therapy (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 179

solved his problems or accept the interpretation simply to please the counselor. In a genuine relationship, however, in which client and counselor are deeply committed to a working through of counseling goals, the counselor will have sufficient confidence in himself to work through an interpretation.

Essentially what Brammer and Shostrom indicate about confrontation is its interpretative nature. They seem to have a fear of a wrong interpretation, and they demand that the ultimate justification of such a confronting interpretation be the client's internalization of the counselor's interpretation.

However, while all confrontation on the part of the counselor is at the verbal level rooted in a verbal interpretation, nevertheless, there is a non-verbal intuition on the part of the counselor that the relationship is at an impasse. The confrontation places the responsibility for moving forward on the part of the client. Thus, even a wrong interpretation can prove most beneficial for it may cause the client to become actively involved in the interpretation.

A wrong diagnosis of the symptoms of the client when brought into the open are just as much a confrontation for the counselor as for the client. There is a movement towards a better understanding of the client. But basically what happens in the confrontation is an interpretation of the genuineness of the interpersonal relationship. "Are we ready to make mistakes together?" "Are we ready to work

together?"

Confrontation Within Facilitative Conditions

The most thorough study available of confrontation is that of Robert Carkhuff and Bernard Berenson. They define confrontation as: "An act initiated by the therapist which serves as a vehicle to bring the client in direct touch with his own experiences so that he can move from a passive-reactive stance toward an existence rooted in action, direction and meaningful confrontation."[26]

They trace the history of confrontation claiming that it has been restricted to only special instances of counseling practice--character-disordered clients and familiar, short term crisis situations, aggressive delinquents, and preventative therapy. In general, the counselor only confronts in the face of client aggressiveness. This would mean that rather than being a valued act, confrontation is a defense reaction.

However, as Carkhuff and Berenson see it, confrontation is not destructive. It is initiated by the counselor based on his core understanding of the client. It brings the client into more direct contact with himself, his strengths and resources, as well as his self-destructive behavior. The counselor undertakes the risk of confrontation out of deep commitment realizing that the client's defenses are his enemy and do now allow him direct contact with himself. The

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[26] Ibid., p. 170.

counselor wishes to reduce the ambiguity and incongruities in the client's experiencing and communication. It is a challenge to the client to become integrated, to become one with his experiences. Confrontation is directed at discrepancies within the client's ideal self versus his real self, between what the client says and does, between illusion and reality.

Confrontation is a challenge to the client to mobilize his resources and take another step toward deeper self-recognition or constructive action on his own behalf. It precipitates a crisis--at least temporarily in the client's personal and social equilibrium. Crisis is seen by Carkhuff and Berenson as the very fabric of growth involving new responses and charting new development.

Confrontation serves to combat the pervasive, passive-reactive stance which the alienated person assumes toward life in general, and his present difficulties in particular. The alienated person is out of touch with himself and his environment in greater or lesser degrees. Although the client who has come for counseling has already confronted himself, he reacts at times to the counselor with the same defenses and with the perceptual distortions that he uses in his everyday experiences. The client is afraid to come to new perceptions or new behavior. That is precisely why the client is stagnated at certain behavioral levels.

However, since Carkhuff and Berenson see the counseling relationship as a factor of core facilitative conditions

(genuineness, positive regard, empathy and concreteness), they then recognize that the counseling experience itself is the condition upon which confrontation can occur. Essentially the confrontation is directed against playing a counseling game, against role playing. If the client can succeed in devitalizing the counselor as a whole person, then he can reinforce his own fear of seeing and acting in a new way. If the client can fake insight by merely making greater verbalizations of his problem, and if the counselor does not confront him with this fact, then the client will never emerge from the counseling relationship with a new direction in activity.

The counselor, as a model of how to learn to give direction to one's life activities, cannot pretend not to see the client's procrastination. When the counselor confronts the client, he is at the same time risking the counseling relationship. The confrontation focuses the counseling relationship on the direct, honest truth: Why are you here? To play a game? To support each other's neuroses? No, the vital human being's life is one of growth and the desired result of a confrontation is continued growth of client and counselor alike.

Carkhuff and Berenson see growth as a series of endless confrontations. Confrontation is a vehicle that ultimately translates awareness and insight into action, directionality, wholeness and meaning in the life of the client. "A life without confrontation is directionless, passive and impotent."[27]

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[27] Ibid., p. 174.

Confrontation involves risk. In a genuine confrontation the counselor risks the client's termination of the relationship. The counselor risks the possibility of psychotic break or even suicide on the part of the client. The counselor risks an attack on himself. But most of all the counselor risks growth for the client. However, in a successful confrontation the client received an experience of who he really is, in all of his humanity, strengths and weaknesses. The death of an illusion can lead to the birth of a strength--after an initial experience of death to the illusory self, the void which is temporarily created has a chance to be filled with the person's real being. While building upon the shadow, there is little energy to expand the substance.[28]

The counselor uses confrontation as a vehicle to initiate a crisis and to facilitate a choice point (life or death) by bringing the client in touch with himself, and confronting him with implications and alternatives. The counselor in a very real sense clears away the irrelevant material for the client at the choice point. The counselor takes the responsibility for precipitating the crisis, but the client takes responsibility for his choice. Through confrontation, the counselor precipitates awareness of crisis; he does not create the crisis. The counselor is intervening; and, as a result, what the client thought would destroy him--loss of an illusion--he finds as a source of growth.

The risk involved in the confrontation is not a whim;

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[28] Ibid., pp. 177-8.

more importantly, it cannot be techniqued. The risk is taken on the basis of the counselor's confidence in himself as having chosen direction in his own life. The risk is taken on the basis of the counselor's awareness of the strengths in the client, strengths which have revealed themselves in the very formation of the client's relationship with the counselor. The client can choose. He needs the example of one who has chosen and who manifests that very choice in the act of confrontation.

The counselor who is willing to take the responsibility of confrontation needs to know, at his deepest level, that he is a human being who wants life for the client because he has chosen life for himself.[29]

The study of Carkhuff and Berenson includes a consideration of confrontation and insight. They feel that there is no one solution--or series of insights to health--only a series of confrontations. The alienated person, who seeks only insight slowly decays while having the illusion of making progress. For the alienated person, confrontation as a way of life is diametrically opposed to insight. It is action orientated. Life is experienced as effecting the self rather than some third person. Because action is a way of life, the person becomes one with what he wants to be, stemming from listening to his own inner silence.[30]

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[29] Ibid., p. 177.

[30] Ibid., p. 177-8.

Carkhuff and Berenson give several examples to illustrate the constructive rather than the destructive nature of confrontation:

> C: I like to see myself as different from all others.
> T: Your uniqueness, that's not real for you though.
> C: I don't know. I don't want to be nobody, just part of the crowd, so I try to do things that are different from everyone else.
> T: You try to act unique.
> C: I guess that's true because I always come back to doing what everyone else does anyway. I've always been a nobody and no one ever really notices me like a few of the girls who are natural about things and seem to know what they want. I envy them!
> T: But what about you?
> C: I don't know who I am.[31]

In this example, the client wants to see herself as being "unique." In order to make her illusion come true she looks for ways to act differently than others. In reality, however, she is afraid of rejection by the group and is actually conforming to the prevailing norms of the group. In counseling her illusion of being unique is confronted and she becomes involved in the process of searching for herself.

The following example is more direct. Here the client is confronted with his inability to apply his newly discovered insights.

> C: I now understand what my father has done to me. It's all very clear to me. I think I've got the situation licked.
> T: But you're still getting up at 5 o'clock in

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[31] Ibid., p. 174.

the morning for him when he could get rides from a lot of other men.

C: Well, uh, he is still my father.

T: Yeah, and you're still scared to death of him... scared that he'll beat you up or disapprove of you and you're thirty-five years old now. You still fear him like you were a kid.

C: No, you're wrong, because I don't feel scared of him right now.

T: You're scared right now--here--with me--he's here...

C: (pause) I guess I understand him better for what he is, but when I'm around him, I'm still scared, and always think of standing up to him after I leave him. Then I talk myself out of doing what I really want to do.[32]

The process of helping a human being become a whole integrated organism is exhaustive and challenging as well as rewarding and fulfilling. The counselor who serves as an authentic model of confrontation as described by Carkhuff and Berenson offers to the client a meaningful example of effective living.

Confrontation in Life

Confrontation in counseling simulates actual life experiences. Normal confrontation in daily life cannot be avoided. Every human being experiences it in many different ways as he develops and comes face to face with the various crises of life. The more he is able to conquer and move through these normal crises--the weaning from mother, going off to school--the less neurotic anxiety he will develop.

When the individual can find no objective reason for his anxiety then he is experiencing more than normal anxiety;

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[32] Ibid., p. 173.

he is experiencing neurotic anxiety; that is, anxiety disproportionate to the real danger, and arising from an unconscious conflict within himself.

Most neurotic anxiety comes from psychological conflicts. The person feels threatened, but does not know where the enemy is or how to fight it or flees from it. Thus anxiety, in a greater or lesser degree, tends to destroy consciousness of self and confuse one to the point of blurring his view of reality.

Such an emotional state is a natural sign of an unresolved conflict within a person. When he becomes aware of the causes of conflict, there is an open possibility that he can find a solution on a higher level of health.

But awareness and knowledge do not always effect action, for action itself is a crisis. Confrontation in counseling can precipitate action because it is directed at the discrepancies within the client, especially those of insight versus action. It can enable the client to face squarely the life and death issues before him, and thus enable him to take the first steps back to life.

Rollo May describes an alive person as one "having conscious direction of his life."[33] It is living in the present rather than in the past or future. To confront the reality of the present moment often produces anxiety. On the basic level, this anxiety is a kind of vague experience of being naked; it is the feeling of being face to face with some

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[33]Rollo May, Man's Search for Himself (New York: New American Library, 1967), p. 221.

important reality before which one cannot flinch and from which one cannot retreat or hide. It is like the feeling one might have in suddenly coming face to face with a person one loved and admired: One is confronted with an intense relationship one must react to, do something about. It is an intensity of experience, this immediate and direct confronting of the reality of the moment, similar to intense creative activity, and it carries with it the same nakedness and creative anxiety as well as the same joy.

Another reason why confronting the present produces anxiety is that it raises the question of decisions and responsibility.[34] One can regress or grow in the face of confrontation, but one cannot remain stagnate.

Francois Sagan, the French writer, says of the inescapable realities of her life: "...I can easily imagine someone I love or some event changing my life. But to change myself, radically deep down, no.... Until now there have been three decisive events in my life: the success of my books, the famous accident, and my marriage."[35] These events in her life brought her face to face with reality, and it can be assumed that it resulted in growth within her as a human being.

In the face of the confrontation of life an individual must choose between life or death. The choice of death

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[34] Ibid., p. 228.

[35] P. Babin, The Crisis of Faith (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963), p. 169.

results in nothingness while the choice of life includes freedom, responsibility and action. Similarly, if both counselor and client allow it to happen, confrontation lays bare honesty in its rawest form.

Confrontation, then, is a placing of oneself in the full impact of a decision. There is a tendency to avoid what is painful or difficult in the vague hope that it will resolve itself or go away. There is a shunning of responsibility. There is a flair of rhetoric, a pretense of some future possibilities, a sidestepping of the issues. There is also the self-emasculation of pretending not have the power to overcome the difficulties, that it lies beyond one's sphere of influence. Confrontation in counseling allows no one to straddle the fence.

Confrontation is an action within a person or an interaction between people in which an unknown or unwanted aspect of reality is brought face to face with all its emotional overtones and with all its challenges for decision to be made. Confrontation is risky because what is confronted may prove to be highly resisted in either a denial or an attack on the person confronting.

Confrontation asks such questions as: "Isn't this true?" "What about doing just that?" "Where do we go from here?" Confrontation demands directions to be taken. Confrontation is also a moment of peak experience because it is an attempt to involve one's total self. The success of confrontation is not to be measured in an ethical judgment

of the direction which it effects, but rather its success in bringing about the total involvement of a person in a decision of responsibility.

The risk involved in the confrontation has an important presupposition, namely, that growth takes place only on the level of the genuine and concrete. The facilitative conditions of empathy and positive regard which Carkhuff and Berenson talk about are indeed most conducive to growth, but at times empathy and positive regard will not appear until after the vague and the ingenuine have been cleared away. This is especially true of those situations where role playing is opposed to growth. Finally while a specific confrontation might be about some weakness, essentially confrontation presupposes unused strengths and energies within people. Confrontation is a calculated risk with the presupposition that persons can meet the reality of becoming more human.

Certainly this encounter with reality is microscopic in dimension: 1) it is a learning experience; 2) it is nondestructive in that it serves to reduce ambiguity and incongruity; 3) it is an authentic experience; 4) it involves risk, crisis, and growth; 5) it is action-oriented and raises the question of decision and responsibility; 6) it focuses upon the strength rather than the weakness of the client.

All of the above mentioned characteristics are obviously highly appropriate as an approach to counseling the high school student. With these characteristics in mind, we will

now examine the concept of confrontation as applied specifically to a high school situation.

CHAPTER 111

CONFRONTATION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL SETTING

Inherent within the nature of the high school setting are several factors which are either beneficial or detrimental to counseling and particularily to confrontation. One such factor is the fact that the counselor is in contact not only with the student, but with his parents and teachers as well. Furthermore, the counselor sees the student in many different situations. This may cause the student to be fearful of initiating a relationship with the counselor, and even cause undue guilt and anxiety in the future sessions with him. However, an effective counselor can establish a reputation of being understanding, trustworthy, and helpful. Word spreads quickly among young people; and what could be a disadvantage becomes an advantage. For the more the counselor knows a student, the more he can help him. What will be discussed, however, should remain the responsibility of the client.

Indeed the high school counselor operates within a unique structure. He has limits which are determined by the nature of his role, yet these same limits give him the freedom to function effectively. For example, the basic philosophy of education in this country is founded on the principles that all men are created equal and consequently have the right

to the pursuit of happiness. It emphasizes the values of personal worth, individuality, and the right to human fulfillment--all congruent and applicable to the ultimate goals of counseling.

Also, the clientele of the high school counselor have a great deal in common with one another. They are peers; they are at that precarious age where they are at once children and adults; they are minors yet have many major responsibilities. These students, whom the counselor advises, work and eat and play together. They spend approximately 180 days a year for four years together. They are subject to the same faculty and administration. It is the wise counselor who uses these limits to enhance his freedom. There are no shortcuts in the counselor's self-preparation for wise counseling. He must be true to himself, true to his position, true to his profession. He must be able to clearly define verbally and nonverbally his function and role within the school structure to himself, to the administration, faculty, students, and parents. The nature and bounderies of his role are determined to a great extent by the nature of counseling and the goals of counseling. Robert Byrne in his book, The School Counselor, speaks of the ultimate goals of counseling:

> The counselor's goal, firmly based on the human worth of the individual, regardless of education, intelligence, color, or background, is to use his technical skills (a) to help each counselee attain and maintain an awareness of self so that he can be responsible for himself, (b) to help each counselee confront threats to his being, and thus to open further the way for the counselee to increase

> his concern for others' well-being, (c) to help each counselee bring into full operation his unique potential in compatibility with his own life style and within the ethical limits of society.[36]

It follows consequently that before the counselor can interact effectively with the student, he must have wholehearted support of faculty, administration, and curriculum. Once this rapport has been established, then the counselor can direct his attention to that most important facet of high school counseling: the relationship between the counselor and client.

Essential to the entire process of counseling and particularly to the counseling relationship are the six basic characteristics mentioned at the end of Chapter II. These are but the means to an end, namely the peak experience or moment of truth which Abraham Maslow describes as coming "from esthetic moments, from bursts of creativity, from moments of insight and discovery, from moments of fusion with nature."[37]

Reaching this final stage or peak experience necessitates a variety of approaches within the high school setting simply because confrontation with regard to high school counseling is so multi-facted.

An analysis of each of the characteristics of confron-

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[36]Richard H. Byrne, The School Counselor (Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston, 1963), pp. 19-20.

[37]Abraham Maslow, "Abraham Maslow," Psychology Today, July, 1968, p. 55.

tation will give evidence of this fact and at the same time illustrate its applicability to high school counseling.

Learning Experience

Theoretically the student is in school to learn--to learn about life, people, the world he lives in, to learn about himself--and through this learning to acquire the skills necessary to lead a meaningful life within society. In school the student learns through textbooks, lectures, independent study, various academic activities, and social contacts. Personal counseling is a unique opportunity and experience for the student. It is a relationship in which the focus is solely and completely on him; a relationship in which he is free to be totally himself--free to become free of himself as well. Education applies generally to everyone in varying degrees. Guidance applies to different groups according to age, sex, position, state in life. Counseling is a face to face encounter between two human beings. It is in counseling that the student learns in no uncertain terms that someone is vitally concerned about him; he learns to listen to himself in others and to others. He learns that someone understands him. He learns that to live one must choose, act, take a chance, have faith in self and others. Perhaps the greatest lesson learned in the counseling situation is the client's discovery and grasp of the concept and meaning of his own human-ness.

This kind of learning and more can take place with or

without confrontation. The point of this chapter, however, is to illustrate how in some cases for some counselors confrontation can strengthen the counseling relationship, facilitate counseling and the achievement of the goals of counseling. The following example and all others used in this chapter are taken from actual counseling situations:

Cl: It's like I have a little bottle inside of me. When something happens that really hurts, I just put it inside of the bottle...

Co: Sometimes it leaks.

Cl: Yeah...

Co: It's leaking right now.

At the time of this interview this student had just lost an election for president of the student council. She was extremely hurt by the loss for several reasons: she felt betrayed by friends who had promised faithfully to help her campaign; she had underestimated her popularity with underclassmen; her pride and self-esteem were shattered. The girl had developed a somewhat stoic approach to events in her life. For her an "it's all right" or an "I don't care" attitude was a show of strength; any show of emotion would be a sign of weakness. Through the confrontation in this interview she learned that it feels good to cry at times; that being hurt is part of life; and that it is important to acknowledge and live that hurt in order to be truly human. The confrontation provided this student with a total experience. She was involved sensually, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Eric Fromm feels that "intellectual knowledge

is conducive to change only inasmuch as it is also affective knowledge.... Intellectual knowledge as such does not produce any change."[38] By this he does not mean that "thinking and speculation may not precede the act of discovery; but the act of discovery itself is always a total experience."[39] Fromm goes on to add that the analyist must:

> avoid the error of feeding the patient with interpretations and explanations which only prevent the patient from making the jump from thinking into experiencing. On the contrary, he must take away one rationalization after another, until the patient cannot escape any longer, and instead breaks through the fiction which fills his mind and experiences reality--that is, becomes conscious of something he was not conscious of before. This process often produces a great deal of anxiety, and sometimes the anxiety would prevent the breakthrough, were it not for the reassuring presence of the analyst. But this reassurance is one of 'being there' not one of words which tend to inhibit the patient from experiencing what only he can experience.[40]

The confrontation given in the example above was a total experience and a discovery for the student. When she returned to school after summer vacation, she was visibly more open with her feelings as observed and commented upon by both her teachers and her friends. The knowledge which she acquired and experienced actually became a part of her total personality. With the help of confrontation she was able to turn knowledge into wisdom.

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[38]Eric Fromm, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 110.

[39]Ibid., p. 110.

[40]Ibid., p. 126.

Reduction of Ambiguity and Incongruity

Knowledge and ultimately wisdom serves to bring a person from the darkness into the light. It is only logical then that since confrontation is a learning experience so too does it serve to reduce ambiguity and incongruity. A very common problem of teenagers is confusion. Very often they come into counseling knowing that something is wrong but not knowing what that something is. Worse yet, many students avoid counseling like the plague simply because they are so confused that they don't know where to begin. The counselor cannot allow the student to seek refuge in intellectual thought or rationalizations. He must help the student in order to reduce the confusion and bring the student in closer touch with reality. Sometimes confrontation can be the means of reducing the confusion.

The following interview deals with a high school senior greatly concerned with the black-white issue.

Cl: You can't understand me. The difference between us is as big as black and white.

Co: I can't understand you because you are black and I am white.

Cl: I don't believe all the things this school teaches about Christianity and love. I don't believe you love me.

Co: You want reassurance that you are loved. (long pause) I love you because you are a human being.

Cl: Silence. (doubtful look)

Co: I admire the courage you show in searching for the truth. I love the fact that you speak your mind. I love the way you

let me know whether you understand what I'm saying or not.

Cl: (sobbing) No one has ever appreciated me the way you do.

Confronted with the genuine love of another person, the hatred and bitterness of the student melted temporarily. Blackness and whiteness were transcended and two human beings touched one another.

At the time of this interview this student was deeply and intimately involved in black power movements. She spoke radically of hatred for white people. Her first statement expressing doubt about the understanding possible between herself and the counselor was actually a doubt about her own ability to love with color being the peripheral problem. Throughout the school year the student was also involved in some group counseling as well as individual counseling. The struggle with the black-white issue is still going on one year later, but she can no longer blame blackness and whiteness, nor does she. Although still suspicious of white people, she does open up to those she feels are sincere. It is also interesting to note that in the classroom this same girl was verbally very active in her sociology class where the race issue was discussed at length. But the sociologist deals with issues--and it is easy to be involved with big issues. This is just like the case of the man in George Leonard's study cited in Chapter II. The man was a giant in the outside world but a dwarf when it came to his own marriage. Counseling is like the marriage; it deals with the personal.

Authenticity

The above interview also exemplifies the authenticity so characteristic of confrontation. The counselor involved in normal school activities with the client has a genuine love for the client which is very concrete. The counselor left herself open to rejection and abuse, but above all the counselor's true feelings had to be expressed. Many times an honest experience with a constructive person is missing from a student's life. Parents, teachers, counselors are too often involved in role-playing and consequently react dishonestly. Even by the time a normal child becomes an adolescent, he is consciously or unconsciously aware of the discrepancies, inconsistencies, and myths of life. He is told by parents that honesty is the best policy, yet they may cheat on their income tax. He is told by teachers that he should express his true opinions, and when he does he is sometimes punished. He is born into a highly competitive society where often the climb to the top of the ladder of success involves loss of principle and self-respect, where being neutral on an issue is more profitable than having an opinion, where being part of the "in crowd" becomes important enough to deny one's own uniqueness and individuality.

It is not surprising that youth is rebelling and retreating. Their cry is "Tell it like it is!" The relationship between counselor and student cannot be a life-like situation. It must be life itself, rooted in honesty and touching the core existence of both client and counselor.

Perhaps more honesty in high school could lead to less discontent on college campuses because if the counselor is authentic, the student too will learn to be authentic. Through savoring its reality affecting his own well-being he can come to see it as a value to be lived.

Risk, Crisis, Growth

A fourth characteristic of confrontation is its involvement with risk, crisis, and growth. This involvement is another reason why confrontation is so highly apropos as an approach to high school counseling. Adolescence itself is a phase of development in which a youth is met by many identity crises: vocational, educational, social, and even physical. The student is at a stage in his life where he is still formulating attitudes and values, setting both short and long range goals, making decisions about vocational and educational choices, discovering himself socially as well as exploring his interests and determining his aptitudes. To meet these crises means a great deal of risk. The possibility of failure, rejection, shame is ever present. For example, a student who knows he hasn't studied in high school and decides in senior year to go to college wonders if he should try to get accepted or pretend that going to college means absolutely nothing to him. To risk means that he will try. His acceptance or rejection from college can't be the measure of success--only the growth involved in such a situation can measure success. Emotional growth can be measured in terms of increasing openness to experience,

increasing trust in one's own capabilities, a comfortableness with one's own being, and increasing control of one's environment.

There is also involvement of risk, crisis, and growth for the counselor. There is the possibility that the client will terminate the relationship thus ending all possibility of giving help to the client. On the more expedient level is the possibility that the client will relate his experience to other students thus making others more reluctant to see the counselor. There is even the possibility that word will spread to administration, faculty and parents. Consequently, in order to confront, the counselor really has to know what he is doing, and have a tremendous confidence in himself as well as in the client. Most important is the relationship which is established between them. The counselor had to transmit his desire for growth for the client.

Decision and Responsibility

Once a person has come face to face with the risk and crisis inherent in confrontation, he cannot turn back. If the confrontation is successful, growth will take place. Growth always raises the question of decision and responsibility whether the decision is made or not. Whether responsibility is taken or shunned, the question of decision and responsibility is there.

One particularly gifted art student faced the dilemma of marrying upon graduation or going on to college. There

seemed to be some doubt regarding her true feelings about her fiance. The two did not seem to share the same interests nor hold similar attitudes toward life.

> Cl: I think the problem is that I want Ron to be like me rather than just accepting him.
>
> Co: You want him to be you.
>
> Cl: I never thought of it in that way. My god, that's an awful thing.

This student, although quite talented and popular, had a difficult time accepting not only her fiance but also her family and peers. This lack of acceptance was actually rooted in her inability to accept herself. As a freshman she had been truant several times and almost flunked out of school. She had risen to the height of student council president with a great deal of pain, effort, and sheer will power. She expected other people to do the same. Yet her success was shakey, unreal, and transient. She needed people around her to act as she did in order to reinforce her own behavior, to verify for her that "this is the way things are." Without the reinforcement she was lost and confused. This was especially true of her fiance since he was such an important person in her life.

The confrontation above goes beyond her insight. There is a difference in wanting a person to be <u>like</u> you and wanting them to be you. The former presupposes a separate, independent entity, while the latter incorporates the other person to create one entity thus denying the individuality, uniqueness, and freedom of the other person. The client

grasped this in the confrontation in this session. She referred to it in subsequent counseling sessions as she slowly resolved that particular conflict. She learned that his separate individual ego is something to hold on to, to cultivate and to save. Eventually she did decide to marry. One year later she began formal study at the Art Institute. Her husband is still an auto mechanic, and the communication between them is getting increasingly better.

Making a decision is one of the most human activities in which a person can engage. It implies that he knows the choices and their possible consequences and knowing these choices, he has said "yes" to something. He has said "yes" because he has seen his choice as a good thing for himself and he has the confidence in himself to carry through that decision with strength, conviction, and determination.

One is reminded of the story of The Little Prince who, after traveling through the solar system, discovers the meaning of uniqueness and friendship and with content he returns to his self-centered, obnoxious rose which he had left in a huff of frustration. His decision is based on the realization of his love for the rose and his responsibility to care for the object of his love.

So too in confrontation the client is faced with such questions as: How do I really feel? What does this all mean? What can I do? What should I do? What must I do?

Focus on Strength

The answers to the above questions lie in the capabilities within the client. They call for all the strength lying both dormant and alive within his deepest self. They call for the strength which makes it possible to give understanding to his alcoholic parents, acceptance of his own position within a broken home, and ability to live through the failure and humiliation of an F on a physics exam. Confrontation focuses upon that immeasurable, undefinable strength which is so much a part of human beings.

Paul Tillich once said that "No therapeutic theory can be developed without an implicit or explicit image of man."[41] This point, although mentioned before in this paper, needs reiteration because before a counselor can confront he must have certain beliefs and convictions. One of these is his belief in man. He must believe in man's inherent potential. The client-centered counselor, school of Carl Rogers, assumes that man has within him the necessary resources for mental health. All one has to do is observe people to realize that this assumption has to be true. The human person has a tremendous resiliency to bounce back. Take a look at the number of students with alcoholic parents, the students coming from broken homes, the students still plugging away after many failures. The counselor who confronts must believe in the strength of the client while still being aware

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[41] C. H. Patterson, Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 1

of the weakness. "People always do what makes sense to them in terms of what they see."[42] Consequently the process of counseling must develop through the steps of establishing and maintaining the relationship, the working through of immediate and long range problems through insight and discovery to the peak experience of confrontation. Confrontation implies belief in the strength of the client.

Thomas More in A Man For All Seasons speaks of the core of him which no one else can know. The part of him that dictates who he is and what he is--it is within this core that he knows what he is doing is the right thing. Metaphorically all human beings must possess this core. Counseling brings them in conscious touch with it and that contact within one's self gives a man the strength and confidence to act even under adverse conditions.

A high school counselor is unique among therapists since he knows his clients in a very special way. The 130 I.Q. student cannot be allowed to get away with claims of lack of ability; the quiet shy girl in the third row must be helped to overcome her fears of rejection; the flighty blond's misconception of her own ignorance must be faced. All these students can and should be helped through counseling that is deep in understanding, empathy and acceptance. Since confrontation does provide the student with an authentic

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[42]Bonaro W. Overstreet, Understanding Fear in Ourselves and Others (New York: Collier-MacMillan, 1951), p. 134.

learning experience geared to reducing confusion despite its involvement with risk and crisis by bringing a student to a point of action by concentrating on his strength, it must be seriously considered as an approach to counseling in the high school.

Group Counseling

Thus far confrontation within the high school setting has been limited to a one to one counseling relationship. It is also noteworthy that group counseling lends itself well to the high school situation. The physical setting is perfect. There are students available to participate, a counselor to structure, and space and time to utilize. Philosophy, theology, sociology or personal development classes can likewise take part in the session. There are many advantages to be derived from group counseling:

1) A larger group of students can be reached.

2) A sharing among peers not available in individual counseling is provided.

3) Tremendous learning opportunities in-so-far as each student can function as both client and counselor.

There is likewise a certain sensitivity about being in the same physical proximity outside the counseling the counseling group after working through the core facilitative conditions within the group.

At this point it is well to describe the structure of group counseling referred to above. Such a description will

point out the merits of group counseling as a type of confrontation.

First, each member of the group should be aware of what will be going on so that his presence within the group is to some extent voluntary. This can be presented to a study hall group or class in this manner:

> The counseling department feels that some students in this school are having a difficult time with parent-student relationships. One week from now we are starting a group which will meet two days a week. At this time you will be free to express your feelings, listen to others with the hope that you will come to a better understanding of your parents. A situation like this can sometimes be painful so consider carefully whether you want to join or not. If you are interested, please sign the piece of paper which is being passed around. Your signature on that paper will commit you to five sessions with the group. At the end of that time you are free to drop out or commit yourself for the remainder of the semester.

At the first meeting of the group it should be explained that the success of the group will depend on the group members' reciprocal trust and individual openness. Each group member directs his comments to the leader who, in turn, responds to the group member. The last fifteen minutes of the session are devoted to an evaluation of the session. After the first few meetings any member of the group can become the leader.

Basically the same ingredients necessary in a one-to-one relationship are needed in group counseling, namely empathy, understanding and acceptance for the well-being of one another as well as each member's deep concern for the well-being of each.

Confrontation, as presented in this paper, can serve to

facilitate counseling in groups in the same manner as individual counseling. The danger here, however, is that the leader must always be alert and aware that he fulfills the constructive rather than the destructive elements of confrontation. Since the group members will be confronting one another, there is a danger of confrontation being an attack or a challenge rather than an act of love. It must be made clear too that each member of the group is free and welcome to follow up the group sessions with individual counseling.

These generalities will be made more meaningful by some examples of confrontation resulting from group counseling.

In one session one of the members of the group evidenced shame of her Spanish heritage at a time when nationalism was running high. Other Spanish speaking girls in the group, rather than trying to understand the girl's anguish and torment were aghast and began to attack. After the session her feelings were widely known to students outside the group as well as faculty members. The next session proved to be tremendously dynamic. Added to the girl's initial dilemma of being ashamed of her ancestry was her feeling of betrayal by the group. Here were not one but three confrontations.

At another session, the leader of the group was a priest. There were hostilities expressed between him and a group member who had a particularly unfeminine way about her. In one session the priest spoke of the fact that she was very

sexually attractive to him. The group members, never thinking in terms of a priest having sexual feelings, responded in different ways. Some were embarrassed, others were shocked, some were disappointed. No one was left unaffected. Each girl's perception of the priesthood had somehow been altered through this one man's honesty.

At another session a girl who was very active and popular in school revealed a self-concept based on confusion, dislike and impatience. She was greatly admired and even envied by other members in the group. Her revelation helped some of the other members in the group better understand their own self-concepts.

Another girl threatened other members in the group by her silence:

Member: Joan never speaks at these meetings. I always feel she is thinking something awful about me...that I'm stupid or something.

Leader: You wish Joan would say something.

Joan: The reason I never talk is because I'm afraid.

In this brief exchange a group member confronted Joan with what she thought was Joan's lack of participation. Knowing that the member actually liked her, Joan was able to confess her fear to the group. That small phrase she uttered gave her a comfortable feeling as well as a feeling of belonging. She became more verbal in subsequent sessions.

Within such an atmosphere of concern and love, confrontation brings reality into focus. It drives the client

into a corner where there can be no escape from the truth. He must open himself to that truth and face it becoming a better person as a result.

A small percentage of students who sign up for group counseling, however, do drop out for various reasons. Some are not ready to face the truth, others cannot bear to know themselves or others and their feelings of extreme discomfort force them to leave. Others feel that they do not need this sort of thing. All students who drop out should be requested to hold one private counseling session with the counselor in order to balance the departing student's feelings.

Some of the reactions and evaluations of members of the group who remained for the entire semester may prove beneficial to the interest of this paper: "I never knew other people felt the same way I do." "Before I joined this group, I hated her. Now I really like her." "I don't feel so alone anymore." "It feels good." "I get along so much better with my mother now." "I really learned to listen to other people."

To what extent confrontation is responsible for these reactions is not scientifically measurable. However, it can be assumed that confrontation within the entire framework of counseling does make counseling more meaningful in both individual and group counseling. The use and effectiveness of confrontation in the last analysis will always depend upon the counselor himself.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The only reasonable starting point from which to increase the quality and quantity of nourishment of all relationships is the whole counselor, a person acutely aware of his own experience.[43] The most vital resource a counselor can offer to a client is an interpersonal relationship.

The commitment of the counselor must lead him to an exploration of what is knowable in the area of counseling. It has long been determined within the discipline that each individual counselor learn to use his own personality most effectively within the counseling situation. The shortest distance between two points remains a straight line. The most effective communications between two human beings is direct and honest communication.[44]

This paper presents the concept of confrontation for consideration by counselors. We have explored the definition of counseling, its purpose, function and goals. We have discussed the literature on confrontation through the writings of John Branan, George Leonard, Lawrence Brammer, Everett Shostrom, Robert Carkhuff, and Bernard Berenson. From the writings of these men, we have deliniated the basic ingredient

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[43] Carkhuff and Berenson, op. cit., p. 1.

[44] Ibid., p. 12.

of confrontation and applied them to the high school setting in the hopes of helping the high school counselor become more dynamic and consequently more effective. Theoretically speaking counseling is not a self-perpetuating institution. Ideally counselors should be in the business of putting themselves out of business since by the nature of his profession each counselor must be willing to "live" with his client. The client in turn will learn to "live" and carry his life choice to all with whom he comes in contact to the benefit of the entire society.

The nature of counseling, its goals and the function of the high school counselor are consistent with the concept of confrontation if the counselor accepts the idea that counseling is a helping relationship whose desired effects are the personal development of the individuals through action.

A confrontation used within the facilitative core conditions of empathy, understanding, acceptance and love always means movement. The client cannot remain the same. He may reject the confrontation and in that sense take a step backward. He may accept the confrontation and make a move forward. At the moment of confrontation the counselor doesn't really know what choice the client will make, but his faith and trust in himself and in his client tells him that this is the right time for confrontation.

As it exists now in counseling, confrontation is not a techniqus but a spontaneous moment of an interpersonal nature. It employs that element of humanity which in many respects

is immeasurable and indefinable. Its very intangibility may well be one of the objections raised about confrontation since it does not lend itself well to scientific experimentation. Yet Abraham Maslow has made great strides in the area of motivation and E.P. Torrance has done well in measuring creativity.

Objections also may be raised about the evaluative or judgmental aspect implicit in the concept of confrontation as well as the danger of a counselor attempting to make each client into his own image. But confrontation presupposes that the counselor functions through a fuller synthesis of research, theory, the creative consideration of all theories and research in order to develop preferred modes of treatment, and the development of an integrative model of his own consistent with who he is and one with which he is able to employ the totality of his being.[45]

A person cannot give to another what he does not have. The whole person who is honest has an awareness of humanness and is in the full sense of the word sensitive to others so that he will not use another person. Also counseling requires that counselor and client have a shared experience. The effective counselor must continually be aware of himself as well as the client.

It is recommended that each counselor periodically redefine for himself, teachers and students his particular function in the particular school and his own philosophy of

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[45] Ibid., p. 197.

of counseling in order that the counselor be able to function with the maximum amount of freedom and success.

An understanding and acceptance by others of what he is attempting to accomplish will facilitate the counselor's role in the school. If confrontation is to be interpreted and employed successfully in the school, the counselor must be working with not against other school personnel. Also the counselor must be aware of the benefits of group work to confrontation and counseling.

The research on confrontation is growing. Although the model is taken from life situations, further investigation of its nature, purpose and effects is advisable. A compilation of phenomenological descriptions of the events surrounding the confrontation might prove enlightening.

Confrontation offers justification for continual self-evaluation within the field of counseling as well as for each individual counselor. It is hoped that this paper has contributed to arousing an awareness of the possibility of using confrontation as an approach to counseling. Perhaps confrontation like attitudes will be caught rather than taught.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Mary Josephine Denja has been read and approved by the members of the School of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

1/17/70
Date

Richard A. Wellington
Signature of Advisor